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Nation

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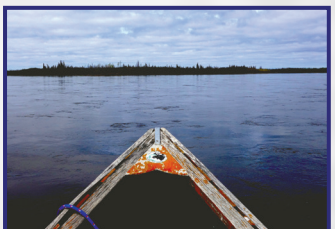

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Photo by Catherine Orr

The wrong arm of the law

by Will Nicholls

Once again Quebec is pushing a policy without taking the time to address how it will affect First Nations in the province. You might think the Quebec government has a collective form of Alzheimer's disease given the forgotten lessons of both the La Grande and Grande Baleine projects. One led Quebec kicking and screaming to the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement and the other was ultimately shelved after an international Cree campaign against it. These are only two examples of the consequences of making unilateral decisions affecting Cree lives and territory.

Lately Quebec decided to add to that with Bill 64, The Firearms Registration Act. First Nations communities and organizations weren't included in the process of drafting the legislation. Instead, the gun-control and gun-lobby groups were heard and pandered to by Quebec's politicians. The bill passed almost without a word of dissent – 99 to 8 – as it supposedly represented public safety and crime prevention.

The National Firearms Association launched a constitutional challenge to Bill 64 and is seeking an injunction until a judge hears the case. So the fight outside Eeyou Istchee on Bill 64 isn't over.

But what are the Cree doing? The Grand Council presented a brief on April 5 to a National Assembly committee studying the bill. It may not be as hard hitting as some would like it, but various laws and legally binding agreements support their objections.

Those are based mainly on the constitutionally protected rights, including Cree traditional and harvesting rights. Section 24.3.18 of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement enshrines the exercise of the right to harvest, saying it "shall not be subject to the obtaining of permits, licenses, or other authorization."

Crees have used guns for centuries for harvesting activities. As such, the Cree Nation Government is willing to look at a Cree-Quebec table to look at these issues and solutions.

The argument that a police officer needs to know if there are guns in the house doesn't work in Cree communities. Every Cree home has guns. No registry is needed to know that. Every Cree child is taught how to use guns safely. Children know guns are a necessary tool in the Cree way of life.

The disregard for First Nations people in the design of this law is shameful. Our ideas and suggestions would have made this move much more acceptable. As it stands, however, a Cree with an unregistered weapon can expect fines and possible confiscation of their arms. Yet another court case seems to be in the works if the historic rights of Aboriginal people are ignored.

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Singing for peace

Music video project has given Attawapiskat's youth a **positive voice**

by Peter Wheeland

Despite the challenges Attawapiskat youth have faced recently, one group of teens has managed to rise up from the dust and, with the help of the DAREarts charity, has produced a music video that speaks to both their frustrations and hope for their isolated James Bay community.

Called Walking for Peace, the video is the creation of Vezina High School students and a few recent grads who teamed up to write, sing, act, edit and produce the 5:20-minute video (http://bit.ly/294jcGT). Released on National Aboriginal Day, the lyrics describe the conflicting emotions of young people who see the problems of their community, but who also see home, and hope.

Take a look at the media, but not everything is as it seems
You see crisis after crisis, but you don't see what we see
In this community we are fighting for equality and peace
Increase, decrease, deceased, something here needs to be done

Attawapiskat youth council member Karis Linklater, who helped write the lyrics, told the Nation that the young people involved in the project didn't "want it to be about what the media is telling everybody. We wanted it to be about our home. The media is just telling us what is bad – and it's not all bad. A lot of people call it home."

She lists hunting, camping, getting out on the land and the strong sense of community as some of the positives of living in Attawapiskat.

However, a lack of activities for young people in any community can produce an environment where the desire to escape boredom or troubles at home leads to experimentation with drugs, alcohol and sex. It's a breeding ground for depression, addiction, violence and suicide. In the cities and suburbs of the south, teens complain of boredom, but they are surrounded by parks, organized social and sports activities and are often just a bus ride away from any diversion imaginable.

Kids in Attawapiskat have none of that. The village on the mouth of the Attawapiskat River suffers, like many Indigenous communities in the north, from a severe shortage of basics from housing to affordable food, never mind the luxury of a youth centre or the personnel to staff it.

So Linklater, 20, was surprised during a recent visit to the high school to find that a team from DAREarts was there providing guidance to help kids create their own music video. "There haven't been any youth activities for a long time," she said.

Musician Glenn Marais was leading the songwriting/recording workshop. Before long, he had Linklater helping write the lyrics, shoot the scenes and edit the rough cuts with about 15 other youths. "It was amazing," she enthused. "I never really did anything like that before!"

Has it made a difference? "Seeing youth come together and really get into stuff like this makes me happy; it must make other people happy, too," Linklater said. "I think it really helps youth feel uplifted when there's such good things going on around the community."

Friends really like the video, she adds. "I guess they never thought they would see something like that made here." Her parents, of course, were proud, too. "They were really surprised at how good it came out," she laughed.

How about youth in the community? Has the national attention focused on Attawapiskat produced any changes? "I can't speak for each and every youth," Linklater said.

"But I'm pretty sure it got better because there hasn't been many attempted suicides lately. And we're trying to get activities going and getting them involved in stuff – other than drinking and drugs and all that negative stuff. I know what it's like to struggle with what happens in the community. I just want them to know that there's positive things that can go around, too."

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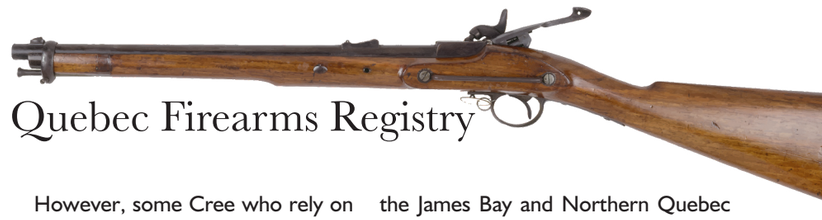
News

Father teaches son proper gun safety

Registering an objection

First Nations critique Quebec Firearms Registry



by Dan Isaac

Quebec's National Assembly passed Bill 64 by a 99-8 vote June 10 to create a new Firearms Registry after only a last-minute hearing from First Nations in the province.

Assembly of First Nations for Quebec and Labrador Chief Ghislain Picard said the approach to Aboriginal concerns was perfunctory. "What we find, with proposed legislation, is that our voice is included only at the tail end of the process, and this bill is no different," said Picard.

Nonetheless, after a meeting with the Grand Council of the Crees, the Quebec government will now discuss how the law can be applied in a way that takes account of Aboriginal hunting culture.

"The law, though it's already been passed, is still very much open for discussion," assured Picard. "Quebec is open to finding accommodations within the law to support our claim."

The Grand Council is asking for assurances that inherent rights will not be infringed upon. "Bill 64 seeks to address important policy objectives of public security… in the wider Quebec society," Grand Chief Mathew Coon Come said in a statement. "This objective must be balanced with constitutionally protected Cree rights."

However, some Cree who rely on long guns for subsistence hunting, like Paul Dixon, are having a harder time finding the silver lining.

"Every day the government strives to kill our inherent rights," said Dixon. "What happened with the last gun registry is we all unknowingly became criminals overnight."

Under the new Firearms Registration Act, failing to register a long gun won't result in a criminal record, but it will carry a fine of $500 to $5000. The problem, Dixon pointed out, is that many Aboriginals live outside the reach of communications media and may end up facing a large fine without even knowing they had to register their weapons.

"It is going to infringe on our rights," Dixon insisted. "You need a spoon for a hot soup. We don't kill a moose with electricity and we can't go back hundreds of years and start using a bow and arrow again."

Picard echoed the sentiment. "Guns have been used for sustenance in our communities [ever since they were available]. It goes back to a recognition of rights, the constitution clearly states we have Aboriginal and treaty rights."

The law may also infringe upon Cree treaty rights established under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. Coon Come, in his presentation to a Quebec National Assembly committee studying the law, said the legislation contradicts paragraph 24.3.18 of the JBNQA.

According to the agreement, "The exercise of the right to harvest shall not be subject to the obtaining of permits, licenses or other authorization, save where expressly stipulated otherwise in this Section… the Native people shall have the right to receive such leases, permits, licenses or other authorizations at a nominal fee through their respective local governments."

Coon Come's final recommendation was to establish a committee that would "discuss options in relation to Bill 64 and its draft regulations in order to identify exemptions and particular modalities for the Cree and other mechanisms relating to its implementation in the Cree context."

As for Paul Dixon, who is a hunter, trapper and gun-safety instructor, he doesn't want to see history repeat itself. "My dad went to jail for killing a moose a long time ago," he recounted. "You know what he said? He said if I was a law-abiding citizen I'd starve to death."

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TEHQ graduates 2016

Niskamoon Corporation announced that there were 15 Technical Employment with Hydro-Québec (TEHQ) graduates in 2016. Nadia Duquette, Patricia Renault, Niko Capissisit, Travis Grant, Warren Mapachee, Samy Mark-Thameri, Kehoe Mowatt and Eric Pien all received a diploma in Automated Systems Electro-Mechanics from the Rouyn-Noranda School Board's Centre Polymétier in a ceremony June 9.

At a second ceremony in Amos on June 10, Noémie Mowatt-Parent, Tanya Nottaway, Lorianne Trapper and Shane Polson were awarded diplomas in Industrial Construction and Maintenance Mechanics from the Centre de formation Harricana.

Other TEHQ graduates this year included Hakim Mark-Thameri in Industrial Electronics in Instrumentation and Automation from the Cégep de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue in Rouyn-Noranda; Evelyn Moore-Bordeleau in Industrial Electronics Technology in Telecommunications/Computers from the Cégep de Saint-Laurent in Montreal; and Gregg Kanatewat, in the same program, from the Cégep de l'Outaouais in Gatineau.

These 15 graduates – six women and nine men – will be joining their co-workers at Hydro-Québec over the next few months.

Joseph Hardy Audate mourned

Joseph Hardy Audate, 61, passed away on June 18 after an unfortunate boating accident in the Chapais/Waswanipi area. Hardy worked with the Cree School Board for 26 years as a teacher, vice-principal, principal, consultant and most recently as Coordinator of School Operations.

Michelle Gray, Director of Nursing for the Cree Health Board, described Hardy as "a kind man…well-respected by all those who knew him."

Hardy leaves behind his wife Aïssatou Bah, two children, two grandchildren and a number of brothers, sisters, stepbrothers and sisters, goddaughters, nephews, nieces, cousins, aunts, colleagues and friends. Bah also worked for the Cree Nation and recently retired after serving as a nurse with the Cree Health Board for over 20 years.

"How do I begin to pay a tribute to someone who has meant so much for so many Cree people?" stated Cree School Board Chairperson Kathleen Wootton in a letter of condolences to Hardy's family. "Hardy was a friend, colleague and mentor to many who worked with him; he was also very supportive of others, especially his students. He will be remembered for his quiet wisdom, humility and dedication."

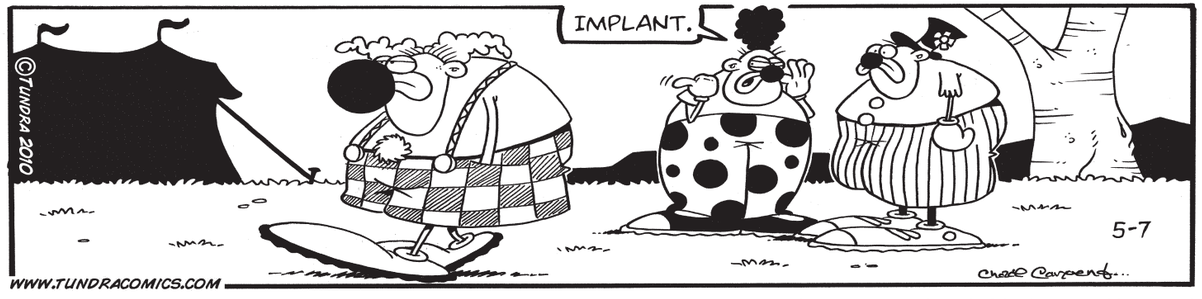
More medical flights to be added

The Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay (CBHSSJB) and Air Creebec will be signing an agreement to put in place a second medical air charter service called the Cree Patient Inland Air Charter. The charter will fly five times a week out of Chibougamau and transport patients from Mistissini, Oujé-Bougoumou and Waswanipi to Val-d'Or and Montreal. The inaugural flight leaves for Montreal July 11 from the Chibougamau Airport following a special ceremony and blessing of the plane by an Elder.

"The second charter service for patients is part of a larger commitment to improve the quality of service for patients and escorts travelling outside Eeyou Istchee," said Director of Cree Patient Services Kathy Shecapio in a press release.

The inland charter will provide more comfortable, convenient and efficient travel for Cree patients, their families and their escorts and will also have a nurse on-board. By taking off and landing at Air Creebec's BFO terminal, passengers heading to and from Montreal will bypass crowds and line-ups and benefit from quick check-in procedures.

The Cree Patient Inland Air Charter is the second phase of the CBHSSJB's air transport strategy and according to interim Executive Director Daniel St-Amour, a feasibility study is underway to look at a potential third charter for Nemeska, Waskaganish and Eastmain.



ROOTS, RESILIENCE & RECONCILIATION

The three R's of **Aboriginal Day**

by Dan Isaac
Photos by Trish Chiasson

Three generations of traditional Mohawk drummers and dancers lead a march to Place d'Armes where naming and tobacco ceremonies took place around a ritual fire.

"**In Montreal** we are on an **Indigenous territory.** Today we are here to **remember** who **the real owners** of the land are."

- André Dudemaine

Below: Leonard Bourdeau, Mohawk iron-worker and traditional dancer

Elder Sedalia Kawennotas singing a Mohawk welcoming song

Above: Shakoiesontha Khan, 3rd generation Mohawk traditional dancer

In its 20 years of existence, National Aboriginal Day has come to represent the ever-evolving relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canada. It doesn't have the recognition that comes with being a statutory holiday. But it is our day to come together, share songs, dances, ceremonies, art, prayers, gratitude and Indian tacos with our Indigenous brothers and sisters, non-Indigenous allies and those who stumble upon these celebrations during their lunch break.

In Montreal, this year's festivities began just before noon at St-Jacques and St-Laurent with an event organized by Terres en Vues. The event saw three generations of traditional Mohawk drummers and dancers in full regalia lead a march to Place d'Armes, where naming and tobacco ceremonies took place around a ritual fire. Organizer André Dudemaine described it as reminder that, "In Montreal we are on an Indigenous territory. We are here to remember who the real owners of the land are."

As the march arrived at Places d'Armes, Mohawk Elder Sedalia Kawennotas greeted the crowd of observers with a Mohawk welcoming song that, as she informed the non-Native guests, "may have been the first song your ancestors would have heard when they arrived on this land." While she sang, volunteers stenciled the Mohawk expression "ENTIE NONKWA : TI" – meaning "Southern Lane" – in red paint on wooden banners.

Dudemaine argued for the necessity of Indigenous visibility in the city. "If you are living or traveling on this land you are connected to the past and the present, and there is a hidden part, which is the Aboriginal heritage that you cannot see or feel in Montreal," said Dudemaine. "This is our goal, to bring back Aboriginal culture and heritage."

The matriarch of the Mohawk dancers, Sedalia Kawennotas, also spoke to the necessity of sharing our Indigenous culture with non-Indigenous Canada. "There was a time that people who lived in Montreal didn't realize Mohawk were living right across the bridge," she said. "It needs to start in school, those kids, let them learn, teach them about us."

Continued on page 15...

VAL-D'OR PAYS TRIBUTE TO NATIVE WOMEN

by Joshua Grant
Photos by Paul Brindamour

In a subtle nod to the abuse of Native women in the north, National Aboriginal Day celebrations in Val-d'Or this year featured an all-female concert lineup outside the local Native Friendship Centre. "Ikwe: a tribute to love" served as the theme as the event kicked off with a grand entry complemented by traditional food and artisan tents.

"I guess that says it all," said Friendship Centre Executive Director Edith Cloutier. "We really wanted to pay tribute to our women and bring them back to the heart of our Nations. It was a very positive message and there was a really strong turnout of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people."

Cloutier estimated that close to 2000 participated in the eighth consecutive Val-d'Or celebrations organized by the Centre. While the main focus was the outdoor concert emceed by Melissa Saganash of the Cree Nation Government, there was an emphasis on traditional dance, music, crafts and food.

"We had a lot of people showing up with their folding chairs. It's like an outdoor auditorium," she related.

The holiday serves two important roles as cultural celebration and cultural exchange, Cloutier emphasized.

"We can't take for granted that we have positive relationships, we need to eliminate discrimination and prejudice," she explained. "The artists bring messages of friendship and peace and it's a non-aggressive and positive way of teaching others who we are as First Nations people."

...continued from page 15.

After the ceremonies, the Beatrice Deer Band took to the stage and delivered an impassioned performance, calling all present to listen to and care for the Earth and each other.

Many of the people recording the festivities on their cellphones admitted they didn't know it was Aboriginal Day but were genuinely interested. Even the Elders tried to persuade the younger audience to participate with "a selfie opportunity."

Elder dancer Leonard Bourdeau commented on the importance of getting the younger generation interested in learning traditional song and dance. "We need the younger dancers to come up and learn the dances as us older dancers move on into the spirit world."

After the event at Place D'Armes wrapped up, the festivities moved to Cabot Square, where a concert with a powerhouse lineup of Indigenous talent took place after an opening prayer by a Shuswap Elder, drumming by the Buffalo Hat Singers, dances by the Kanesatake female chanters, and an impromptu performance by a Hopi hoop dancer.

The contemporary performances then kicked off with Geronimo Inutiq, an electronic DJ who incorporates elements of his Inuit heritage into his performances. Next was Cree cellist Cris Derksen, whose recent Juno nod for best instrumental record (Orchestral Powwow) has taken her out of the Aboriginal box and placed her into the mainstream.

She spoke of meshing her Indigenous background with classical training. "In all forms of art, there's always a folding over of tradition into something new," said Derksen. "So it's always a process of taking things from [tradition] and making them new again. I've always been interested in that intersection where the contemporary meets tradition so I focus my work in that space."

Derksen believes things are improving for Indigenous people. "There's been a lens shift across the nation towards Indigenous people," she said. "It's not that things have evolved or changed that much. What has changed is how people are starting to receive us. It's now in a more positive manner than we were perceived before."

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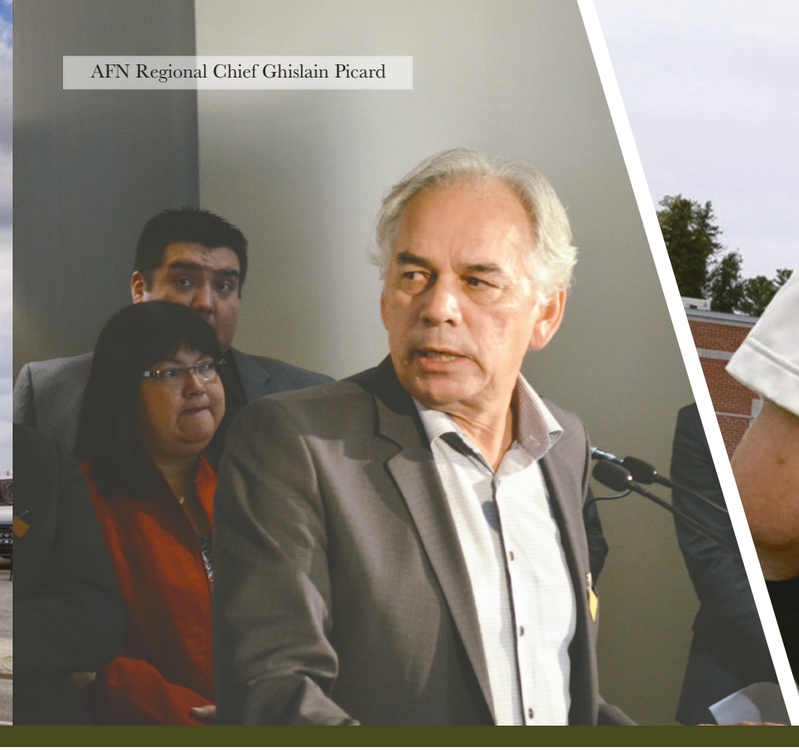
Val-d'Or Native Friendship Center



AFN Regional Chief Ghislain Picard

JUSTICE DELAYED

Length of investigation into allegations of SQ abuse against Native women in Val-d'Or leads to **increasing unease**

by Jesse Staniforth

Eight months after the Val-d'Or police crisis caused an uproar across Quebec, the lack of information, charges or any other resolution of allegations against provincial police officers in the town is leading many to question why the investigation by the Montreal police force (SPVM) is taking so long.

The SPVM delivered a community update in Val-d'Or on June 7. Several days before, the Quebec Crown Prosecutor's Office announced it was still reviewing the results of the investigation and considering whether to lay charges against Surêté du Québec officers now on forced leave from the city detachment. By June 14, said AFN Regional Chief Ghislain Picard, the SPVM still could not provide details whether any of the files had gone forward. "There was no indication as to how many, if any, of the cases went to the prosecutor," Picard told the Nation.

The investigation is dragging on a long time, Picard acknowledged, adding that many people have grown anxious to see it resolved. He said that the continually expanding set of allegations – a *La Presse* report listed 38 allegations by 30 people being investigated so far – has extended the process.

"We could have said, 'Val-d'Or is one thing, let's finish with this then decide whether there are valid accusations [in other places],'" Picard explained. "But what happened is that while police officers in Val-d'Or were being investigated, all this new stuff came out. We know there are women from Sept-Îles, women from Schefferville as well. Are there any more potential victims? Possibly. We don't know."

The expanding investigation demonstrates the need for a judicial inquiry into provincial police behaviour, says Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre Director Édith Cloutier

"I think it's just the tip of an iceberg," said Cloutier. "I think the pressure will be building, because we're not letting go of the position that the Quebec government will need to set up an independent commission to shed full light on the issue of police authority and First Nations people in this province. It's happening in the cities of Quebec with women and maybe men too, in terms of abuse of power. I think we're going to need to sustain that pressure about going beyond just police inquiries."

The SPVM opened an investigation into the original allegations made to the Radio-Canada investigative program *Enquète* last October 22, during which 12 Aboriginal women from Val-d'Or alleged that the town's SQ officers had taken them on Starlight Tours and abandoned them in the woods, had paid them or plied them with drugs for sex, or had sexually assaulted them. In March, a second episode of *Enquète* included a variety of similar allegations from Native women in communities across Quebec – including areas as far to the east of the province as the Côte Nord, and as far to the west as Maniwaki.

Picard noted that there were many discussions within the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador about the response to demand of the Quebec government. The Chiefs voted to push for a judicial inquiry, which could compel SQ officials to testify under oath.

Support for a judicial inquiry is not limited to the AFNQL, noted Cloutier. "This is also being requested by the Cree Nation Government, Quebec Native Women, the Val-d'Or Friendship Centre, and there are now non-Aboriginal civil-society groups such as Amnesty International that have given it support. The Official Opposition at the National Assembly of Quebec has committed themselves to supporting this. I think it's going to go further down."

The crisis has brought the issue of urban Aboriginals to the surface. While in most provinces across Canada, 70% of the Indigenous population lives outside of reserves, in Quebec that number is only 50%. In mid-May, Cloutier attended the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at the United Nations, where she met with other international Indigenous representatives to discuss the allegations against the SQ in the context of police relationships with Indigenous communities worldwide. Cloutier presented recommendations and recently learned they were included in the session's report of the Permanent Forum.

"What's interesting is that in that international report that will be presented to the UN," she said, "it clearly states that we need to look into police authority and police abuses where Aboriginal/Indigenous women are being abused or raped by police, and they give examples like what has been happening in Val-d'Or, Quebec, Canada. And then there's Guatemala, and then there's India."

That could help put pressure on the Quebec, she noted.

"We all know that governments, Canada or provincial, don't like to be pointed at," she said. "They don't like people saying that something's not right and asking what they're going to do about it. The recommendation is calling for the states to take action so that this doesn't happen, and if it does happen, to set up a mechanism so that systemic racism stops."

CREE-ATIVITY

N'we Jinan – from music collective to art festival

by Joshua Grant
Photos by Catherine Orr

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The first ever N'we Jinan music and art festival took place June 24-25 in Mistissini, bringing together a delegation of 80 youth from Eeyou Istchee and beyond who were involved in the production of N'we Jinan's three music albums.

They were joined by locals and youth from other James Bay communities and an Ojibway group from Lac Seul, who made the trip to share their talents and take part in two days of workshops, live visual art displays, DJ sessions and other artistic and musical performances.

Day one of the N'we Jinan's festival focused on educational workshops and speaker sessions at Voyageur Memorial School. For instance, DJ/dancer Classic Roots gave a powwow boot camp, while singer/songwriter Matt Iserhoff talked about love, life and music. Meanwhile, representatives of the Nikaan Project, OJ's video game design program, spoke about virtual reality and how it will help shape the future.

"We wanted to give the young people an in-depth look at Cree people's lives," artist, music educator and festival organizer David Hodges told the Nation. "These are artists who have achieved success but had to overcome certain obstacles along the way. The kids are seeing themselves in the artists and the artists are seeing themselves in the kids and that's an important exchange."

"The thing I enjoyed most was trying something new with music," related Quinn Blacksmith from Oujé-Bougoumou. "It was really exciting, it was fun to see all of the Nations doing their own songs and great to see people come together.

"The Mikw Chiyâm song really spoke to me, I could express myself and say what I felt," he added. "I heard about N'we Jinan and was wondering what it would be like to perform a song and my parents said I could go ahead so I was like, 'Okay, I'll do it'."

Saturday featured a full day of music kicked off by an hour-long DJ performance

Trumpet player Alexandre Blacksmith

Department of
Justice and Correctional Services
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Cree Nation Government

COMMUNIQUÉ

Funding Program to Improve Living Conditions of the Elderly in Eeyou Istchee

Call for Submission of Projects 2016-2017

Deadline - July 19th 2016

The Funding Program offers financial aid to non-profit organizations & Band Councils in education, health, social and cultural services who wish to develop and set up activities, projects and innovative services in order to improve living conditions of the elderly in Eeyou Istchee.

The Funding Program is based on the 2013-2017 Specific Agreement on Regional Adaptation to enhance seniors' living Conditions in the Cree Communities concluded between the Cree Nation Government (CNG) and the Québec Government. This Call for Submission of Projects 2016-2017 has a budget of $565,547.00 for new projects.

OBJECTIVES

a) Promote the benefit and social inclusion of Elders;

b) Encourage Elders to educate the youth and provide advice and information on Cree traditional knowledge, language, values, culture and traditions;

c) Fight against Elder abuse;

d) Support the more vulnerable of elderly;

e) Promote access to cultural activities;

f) Contribute to the improvement of living conditions for the elderly.

FINANCIAL AID

The maximum amount of the financial aid granted to a project cannot exceed 80% of the total costs of the project.

DEADLINE

All applications must be received by **July 19th 2016**. For any further information, contact **Nellie Wapachee Gray**, Liaison Program Officer, by e-mail: **nwapachee@cngov.ca** or by phone at **(418) 923-2330**. Please find enclosed the application form and the criteria of program.

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Montreal's **Native Women's Shelter** highly successful with third **Spirit Walk**

Healing the trauma

by Jesse Staniforth

They set out to raise $10,000, and ended up with $13,600. For an organization used to seeing its budgets cut, the Native Women's Shelter of Montreal (NWSM) had a happy surprise with this year's third annual Spirit Walk fundraising drive. The influx of cash will fund a weekend healing retreat for the shelter's women later this summer.

"It wasn't the government that did this – it's the community that got together and said, 'Let's help,'" said NWSM director Nakuset. "Maybe people are waking up and recognizing that these women and children need help, and they can give it…. Our women are going to benefit. We're going to make them stronger."

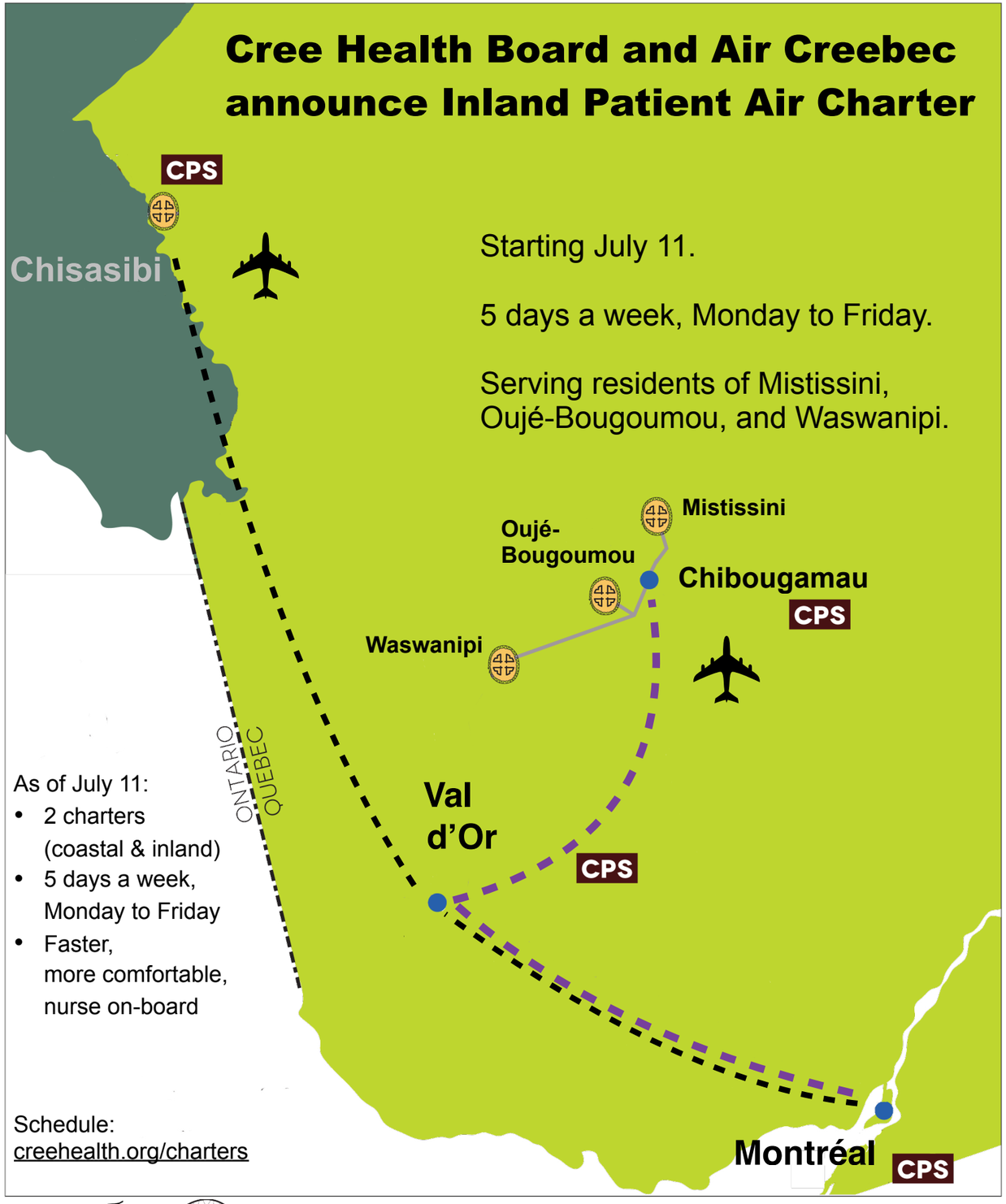
Several years ago, the NWSM received funding from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation for a week-long healing-camp. But then the funding was cut, so they scaled back to a weekend retreat.

"The camp was shared with a whole bunch of other people," she said. "But this place is almost like a spa. The food is amazing; the location is amazing. It's just a time for them to be on the land, to do ceremony. There's no rushing. Just workshops, yoga, ceremony and laughter, and fun."

Nakuset stresses that she didn't want to take money out of the shelter budget for the healing retreat. "Our budgets are always being cut," she noted. "So this is about an opportunity for them – it's a bonus if people want to do this walk."

The Spirit Walk ended a process that began in January with the assembling of a seven-member fundraising team and months of planning. Some supporters

Cree Health Board and Air Creebec announce Inland Patient Air Charter



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Tim Armstrong (right) and community member Andrée lead a round dance

gave directly; others did the walk and looked for people to sponsor them. Those who participated in the event met at the base of Montreal's Mount Royal on a brilliant, hot Saturday, heard a speech from Nakuset and joined in a round-dance led by Tim Armstrong, from Kahnawake's K-103 FM. After that they set out up the road that leads to Beaver Lake at the mountain's top.

Nearly tripling their first-year numbers, the Spirit Walk this year saw 90 walkers, including some members of the community who routinely use the NWSM's services, and some who are there when the need arises.

"When things are rough, they can come in," Nakuset explained. "When they're more stable, they're out. That's the nature of the shelter. For a lot of the women, it's circular. They're good for a while, then something happens, and they have difficulty again. When they come in, we're there to welcome them – we're not judgmental. We just say, 'Welcome back. Let's help you.'"

The warm atmosphere of the shelter is a draw for women living difficult lives. One woman told Nakuset that it reminded her of a sorority. "It's good that they see that – I want people to feel like they're home," Nakuset recounted. "It's wonderful that the women are happy here, but it's not a hotel. It's a place where they're in crisis and we're here to help them. if they're here and they're feeling like themselves and they can laugh, that's awesome."

It can be difficult for many people to understand the day-to-day life of Indigenous women living in vulnerable situations, Nakuset said. For Indigenous people, and women in particular, she emphasized, "Trauma is in our DNA."

HOLD THE FIREWORKS

by Dan Isaac

Filmmaker says her Attawapiskat documentary – aired on Canada Day – should shame the celebrations

Victoria Lean's documentary *After the Last River* follows the one-sided relationship between Attawapiskat, one of Canada's poorest Indigenous communities, and De Beers, the world's largest diamond mining company.

In 2008, De Beers opened the Victor Mine, just 90 km up the Attawapiskat River from the community. Lean first became acquainted with the First Nation through her father, an environmental biologist called to Attawapiskat to assess the rising levels of mercury in the river due to mining activity.

Shot over a five-year period and released in 2015, *After the Last River* was screened on CBC's Documentary Channel July 1. Lean hopes her film will create a pause in the celebrations.

"I want people to reflect," she said. "This country isn't the kind of place we should be celebrating until there's justice for communities like Attawapiskat."

The film reveals the deplorable living conditions in Attawapiskat and contrasts them with the luxurious events put on by De Beers while exploring the overlooked environmental impacts of the mine. Documenting these inequalities had a lasting impact on Lean.

"The longer you spend time with the people, the more you learn – and understand how systemic the inequality is," she explained. "You realize how hard it is for people in Attawapiskat to have an equal chance, and all the barriers preventing them from giving their children and grandchildren a better life."

By making her documentary, Lean had a chance to connect with the community. "I participated in anything I could in the community. I found the people warm and welcoming. I learned so much about community and family and forgiveness. I did a lot of ceremony while I was in Attawapiskat and learned many of the teachings. It's not in the film because those are sacred, but it was really important for me."

She did want those connections to shine through the screen, however. "Documentary is supposed to capture people's hearts as well as their minds," she explained. "There's been so much [media] coverage of Attawapiskat… I wanted to bring an emotional connection to the people and issues in the film."

Though *After the Last River* takes a highly critical perspective toward De Beers, Lean isn't irrevocably against resource development.

"I think it's possible for industry to do things the right way," she said. "There are sustainable ways to mine diamonds, but the way it's being done in Attawapiskat is not one that benefits the community enough – and it poses a high risk to the river."

Lean hopes her film increases awareness among the Canadian public and helps lead to meaningful dialogue that creates lasting change.

"It's not just a picture of Attawapiskat, but a picture of how Canada has treated Indigenous communities like Attawapiskat," Lean insisted. "There needs to be movement on all fronts because the issues are interconnected. Attawapiskat needs to have the authority to make decisions about their lands, and share in the benefits. And Canada needs to support initiatives that empower Indigenous people on a community level."

Background: Canoeing down the Attawapiskat river

DIALOGUE MECHANISM

Exchange and communicate with us!

Your questions, concerns, information requests, comments, etc.

Goldcorp – Éléonore
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GOLDCORP ÉLÉONORE

It's Labrador, man

Rez Notes

I'm sitting halfway up the hills formed from the Precambrian Shield near a cluster of old dry pine trees, which must be at least a half-century old. These wizened tiny trees – our northern Bonsais, I like to call them – live and grow in the cracks of the rocks and have to be some of the most stubborn plants in the world. Their craggy grey branches contrast with the bright deep blue skies. But I look deeper into the tiny northern Bonsai forest for my real quest – the elusive tea of northern Quebec-Labrador.

On closer examination, I see the crystal reflection of the tiny dewdrops, glistening from a recently departed fog that had kept everyone gloomy for the past two weeks. It's a perfect day for picking – a light breeze, sunshine and a few hours alone. With the mist lifted, the tiny Labrador tea leaves are just right for harvesting, before the flowering goes full bloom and dries them out.

I'm writing these words at home and waiting for my fresh tea leaves to boil for a few more minutes before adding regular orange pekoe to get that Whamstigooshioo flavour. To stop the steeping process, I quickly add cold fresh water and top off the pot for a few minutes. Not long after, one of my many nephews shows up for a drink of tea. Soon, I have another pot of tea brewing, two-and-a-half gallons should do the trick for this morning to quench my thirsty nephews.

Back in the day, Labrador tea was a flavouring additive with medicinal properties. The tea comes in many different sizes, colours and potencies. Those who come from Quebec know Labrador tea, but it is treated like an herbal tea. For me and many others, the tiniest teas produce a light minty flavour and odour which is pleasant and thirst-quenching to boot. It's one of my favourite drinks.

I thought about the many different types of teas from around the world and wondered why we had tea in the first place. A long time ago, when tea was first introduced to the barbarians from England (which is what the Asians thought of them 500 years ago), the first sips were spat out and called sludge water by an unknowing English savage.

Within a century, tea had become a major commodity, so economically powerful that whoever controlled the tea trade, could control the world. Angry Boston colonialists grew incensed after the British raised already ruinous taxes on their tea. The rebellion that resulted became known as the Boston Tea Party, which led the way to a major war over a large piece of real estate to our south. Eventually, tea became a symbol for peace and tranquility.

This interest in tea made its way north via the Hudson Bay Company where it was traded for furs, amongst other items. Tobacco was a close second and flour came in third. Other luxury food items were also sought by our people, but tea far surpassed any other item. When times were tough and tea was a luxury item, the Labrador tea, with its soothing scents and tastes, more than made up for the loss of varieties from India.

My teapot boileth over and I hurry to get a few sips in before my thirsty nephews arrive to consume large cups of tea – their grateful smiles tell me my brew was pretty good. The tiny plant is more than just flavouring, it's therapeutic harvesting it from the great wild northern landscape – your view as you crouch down to snip off more leaves from Mother Earth.

I highly recommend cutting the leaves off living plants rather than pulling out the entire plant and removing the leaves at home. Doing this leaves no leaves, get it? Don't forget, you get to snip again a few more times during the short summer season, leaving time for your therapy to take hold and enjoy what you reap.

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The tea for me, says Sonny

Under the Northern Sky

Positive changes

by Xavier Kataquapit

The difference in attitude toward First Nations people with the new federal government is amazing. The contrast with the closed and hostile Harper government is huge. That difference was illustrated by the meeting in early June that members of a Mattagami First Nation youth group had with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett and Health Minister Jane Philpott.

This is a big deal as the government is opening up to First Nation leaders, groups and organizations in an attempt to learn more about the needs and issues affecting Aboriginals across Canada. In the past there was a feeling of hopelessness and desperation from the level of negative pressure from the federal government.

During the meeting, the group discussed issues such as suicide prevention, proper housing, the right to be protected from all kinds of abuse, recreational programs and facilities, equal education funding and teacher retention. Trudeau wanted to know from the presenters how they thought the government should address these issues. What a difference a few months can make.

Trudeau also met with Attawapiskat Chief Bruce Shisheesh and a few of his band councillors, AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde and MP Charlie Angus to discuss the suicide crisis in Attawapiskat First Nation and other Aboriginal communities.

The best thing about these meetings with First Nation people was that Trudeau and his government made an effort to listen to the needs of my people and then made significant commitments to dealing with them. In other words, he put his money where his mouth was. In my 20 years as a journalist, this was the most impressive thing I have seen happen in regards to the relationship between the federal government and First Nations.

Trudeau committed close to $70 million over three years to provide services and assistance including: two permanent mental health care workers for Attawapiskat, a 24-hour culturally sensitive crisis response line, four crisis response teams in Ontario, Manitoba and Nunavut, an increase in the number of mental wellness teams from 11 to 43 for communities at risk, training for existing community-based workers to ensure that care services are provided in a traditional way and funds for new housing for Attawapiskat.

I cannot believe I am writing such positive words about the relationship between the government and my people these days. It is unbelievable how things have changed so much for the better and I am grateful to all those who have put up such a good effort over the years including Theresa Spence, the former Chief of Attawapiskat, to bring us to this point of respect, understanding and positive development.

I say many thanks to our leaders, youth and Elders for making the future of young First Nations people more hopeful. Lives will be saved with these decisions and commitments and I will be eternally thankful for that.

Mattagami First Nation member Christopher Lefevre was part of a (NAN) Youth Group that met with Prime Minister Trudeau.

Nishnawbe-Aski Nation (NAN) Youth Group met with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in Ottawa in early June.

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Robin's Nest Women's Shelter Project

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LOGO CONTEST

The Women's Shelter Working Group including the CBHSSJB are seeking artists and inspired community members to help us design **a new logo for the Robin's Nest Women's Shelter Program.**

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Prize: $500.00

provided by the Cree Nation Youth Council (CNYC)

Submission deadline: July 31, 2016

The logo design can be inspired by the image of the robin in her nest and use the colours of the bird, including black, brown, and rusty orange. We are looking for a design that reflects Cree culture and language, and the themes of unity, healing and wellness.

OUR VISION:

All women and children are safe from harm, live in an empowering and healthy environment and are respected by all.

HOW TO ENTER THE CONTEST

By Postal Mail

Send a colour photocopy only - do not send original artwork.
Make sure you include your name and contact information with your submission.

WOMEN'S SHELTER LOGO CONTEST
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By Email

Send your electronic file (JPG, PNG or PDF) to: **dany.gauthier@ssss.gouv.qc.ca**
Visit our website to learn more about the **Robin's Nest Women's Shelter project** and the full terms and conditions of the logo contest:
http://www.creehealth.org/services/womens-shelters-robins-nest

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